

Alabama Interagency Autism Coordinating Council (AIACC)

Monday, January 14, 2014

Alabama Industrial Development Training Center

The AIACC met on Monday, January 14, 2014, at the Alabama Industrial Development Training Center. The meeting was called to order by Co-Chairperson Bama Folsom Hager. Also in attendance were Council members: Karen Amos, Fred Biasini, Greg Carlson, Joshua Heard, Doris Hill, Elmyra Jones, Melanie Jones, Mitchell Lord, Sarah Ryan, Hanes Swingle, Todd Tomerlin, and ex-officio member and State Autism Coordinator, Anna McConnell. The following proxies were in attendance as well: Russell Green on behalf of Stephanie Azar, Lisa Highfield on behalf of Thomas Bice, David Savage on behalf of Cary Boswell, Erin Wofford on behalf of Nancy Buckner, Steve Lafreniere on behalf of Jim Reddoch, and Dawn Ellis on behalf of Don Williamson.

Minutes from the October 7, 2013 meeting were approved and adopted.

Co-Chair Bama Folsom stated that the Bill for licensure of Board Certified Behavior Analysts is still being pursued. Licensure for BCBAs will help with reimbursement from private insurances later down the road. There are other small legislative issues they will be watching as the session goes forward. This is a short session and will be moving quickly.

State Coordinator, Anna McConnell had the following announcements: A parent shared information with Anna regarding services being offered by Blue Cross, who, as of January 1, 2014, will be partnering with New Directions Behavioral Health and will provide 24/7 telephone access to licensed clinicians for services related to a number of Diagnoses, including Autism.

Anna also noted that the Auburn Transition Leadership Institute published an article about the family of Joshua Heard, a member of the Council, and the journey they have been on as a family with students in the transition years. Copies were provided to Council Members and available to guests.

In addition, Anna spoke with a parent from Mobile who is pursuing college programs for students with Intellectual Disabilities. Other state agencies are also looking into various models to bring to Alabama. There are currently two hundred programs across the nation, but none in our state.

The National professional Development Center has released the Evidenced Bases Practices 2014 report. The link to the report online is:

<http://autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/sites/autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu/files/2014-EBP-Report.pdf>

Mileage reimbursement is now available for parents and self-advocates on the Council who attend meetings. Anna will help those who need help with the paperwork.

Bama added that the Autism Society will include information on the BCBS New Directions Behavioral Health program on their website.

Steve Lafreniere of the Department of Mental Health, representing Commissioner Reddoch, stated that the Department is continuing to pursue Employment First legislation. The bill currently has a couple of sponsors and though it has not been pre-filed, they are hoping it will make it through this session. They also continue to monitor the Health Care Reform to see what it is going to mean for individuals served by the department as well as those on the Spectrum. They expect both opportunities, and challenges.

In New Business, Anna shared they are excited to be partnering with the UAB School of Public Health and the ADDM project to review and update the current Strategic Plan. The original plan was completed in 2011 and now needs updating, as a number of the activities have been accomplished. They hope to have something to present by the April meeting. A lot of goals are the same as they were in the original plan, so they will just be updating some and tweaking others.

Greg Carlson of the Funding and Finance Committee stated they will have some forums upcoming hosted by the Disability Leadership Coalition of Alabama in each of the five regions. They will have more information later.

Melanie Jones shared updates from several Committees. Special Projects – Early screening and Surveillance continues to distribute *Learn the Signs. Act Early* information. They will be putting an ad in the Alabama Pediatricians Journal to update subscribers on *Learn the Signs* and provide contact information. The Autism Society of Alabama will be the point of contact.

Resource Development has an enormous amount of resources they want to get onto a website. They are currently working with Anna. The information will be housed on the ASA website. They are making slow but sure progress.

Community Services & Support – They have had several meetings on Autism Friendly Alabama. A brochure is available. They are working with the UA PR class who will put together a campaign with logos, press releases and social media. This should be a great project once it gets off the ground. They meet via email and webinars so it's an easy area to serve on if anyone is interested, and they would love to have more members.

Autism Society - April will be Autism Awareness Month. They have over 15 walks scheduled over the course of the month on Saturdays.

Bama added that the Autism Society will meet with the Governor on February 19th for the signing of the Proclamation of April as Autism Awareness Month (the date has since been moved). Also, Autism Legislative Day will be March 11th in Montgomery, and everyone is invited. In addition, Autism Bands are available for individuals with Autism who drive. This is a great tool for notifying first responders in routine stops and cases of emergency. These bands are available from the Autism Society.

Guests at this meeting include Sheryl Hand, Georgia Leatherwood, and Marilyn Archibald who represent Alabama Rett Connect. The goal of ALRC is to locate all Rett Syndrome families within the state to help provide access to all the services available to them. Rett Syndrome has many similarities to Autism and can be misdiagnosed as ASD, Cerebral Palsy or non-specific Developmental Delays. Their objective is to raise awareness and establish and maintain a network to help improve the life of all individuals living with Rett Syndrome.

On the program for the day are representatives from the Alabama State Department of Education, Lisa Highfield, Tina Sanders, and Susan Goldthwaite, as part of the Alabama Autism Initiative. The initiative is a part of the plan to meet the goals set by Dr. Bice in Alabama's Plan 2020, a strategic plan that will affect children with autism. One of the goals of the initiative is to have all children graduate and to graduate prepared. These three ladies came together as a team to look at gaps and how best to provide services to fill those gaps. Students with ASD will be prepared for life and transition to adulthood, whether career-ready or college-ready. Each

Local Education Agency (LEA) will have a representative to work alongside representatives from the state level on needs assessment, training, etc.

One of the biggest barriers they are facing is staffing shortages at the state level. Each of the 135 school districts has a contact person at the state level who probably serves 15-17 districts. In addition, each of those contacts serve on a state monitoring team which goes out for on-site monitoring of school systems a week at a time. Plus, each person is responsible for an area, reading, math, etc.

This team will focus on Autism and is backed by Crystal Richardson and Dr. Bice. Training will be offered to LEAs in evidence-based practices of applied behavior analysis, performed by Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) from The Learning Tree. These trainings will be conducted on-site so the teachers will be working in their own environments with their own students. Individual student consultations will also be offered. The Learning Tree will also provide workshops for teachers to increase transition skills for students with ASD.

For more detailed information, you may access the official memorandum from Dr. Bice at <https://connect.alsde.edu/sites/memos/Memoranda/FY14-2028.pdf>.

Suzanne Dowling spoke on behalf of Arts 'n Autism, an after-school and summer camp program for children in Tuscaloosa. The program is available for children from preschool to young adulthood. The program provides supervised visual and performing arts activities for children, respite for family members and other caregivers, as well as meeting a practical need for families, in that it is a safe environment for their children after school.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

Next meeting: April 14, 2014

Recording Secretary

C. S. Weldon 1/14/2014